



SEVP InFocus Webinar Nov. 10, 2015 1 – 2 p.m. EST Transcript

Slide 1: Title Slide

MODERATOR:

- Hi everybody! My name is Lauren Caricato and I want to welcome you to SEVP's first InFocus webinar. Over the next hour, we'll discuss important program news and updates.
- I will be moderating today's webinar, and will be joined by Marissa Tinsley and Tandice Ghajar from the SEVP Strategic Communications Team.
- Marissa and Tandice, could you briefly introduce yourselves to our viewers?

Slide 2: Webinar Presenters

PRESENTER 1:

- My name is Marissa Tinsley and I started working at SEVP in 2010 in the School Certification Unit doing Initial certifications. I later transferred to my current position on the Strategic Communications Team, where I now work with Tandice.

PRESENTER 2:

- Hi everyone, I am Tandice Ghajar and I am also on the SEVP Strategic Communications Team. I used to work in SEVP's compliance unit and also did some policy-related work. My primary focus is student issues.

Slide 3: Presentation Overview

MODERATOR:

- Thanks guys!
- First, I hope everyone took a moment to complete our poll. This information will help us know how many of you are watching today.
- I also have a few brief notes and reminders for those in the audience:



- You can view a copy of today's webinar agenda on the right-hand side of your screen.
- You can also open our Hyperlink Appendix, which contains links to all Web pages mentioned during this presentation.
- About one week from today, a recording of today's presentation and webinar transcript will be available on Study in the States – the same place you went to access this webinar. We'll notify you when this presentation is available through a Study in the States blog post and social media messages, so if any of your colleagues weren't able to make it today with you, let them know they can watch it next week!

Slide 4: Regulatory Fast Facts — STEM OPT

MODERATOR:

- Now that we have those housekeeping notes out of the way, let's get to it! We'll start with a hot topic that I'm sure a lot of you want to hear about — STEM OPT.
- Tandice, would you mind telling our viewers a little bit about STEM OPT and the proposed regulation?

PRESENTER 2:

- As I am sure many of our viewers are aware, DHS submitted a notice of proposed rulemaking back in October.
- The rule would allow certain F-1 STEM students to extend their OPT period by 24 months with the appropriate mentoring and training by employers. Under the proposed rule, STEM OPT extensions would only be available to F-1 students with degrees from accredited colleges and universities, and whose employers are enrolled in the USCIS E-verify employment eligibility verification program.
- By increasing access to OPT for STEM students, the proposed regulations will help U.S. colleges and universities remain globally competitive in attracting international students in these fields. It also strengthens the OPT program to better ensure that practical training opportunities are designed to meet student needs, while requiring greater accountability of employers and students.



MODERATOR:

- I've heard that DHS and SEVP have invited members of the public to comment on this rule. How can our stakeholders provide feedback on the proposed regulation?

PRESENTER 2:

- That's correct, Lauren — the proposed rule is open for public comment until next Wednesday, November 18, 2015. All comments must be received by DHS on or before this date.
- We encourage you to provide your feedback by submitting comments electronically or through the postal service. For detailed instructions on how to comment, visit the Federal Register's website.

MODERATOR:

- Thanks, Tandice — we've actually received quite a few comments from our stakeholders about this rule, but still encourage you all to get out there and submit your comments. I'd also like stress that you should submit your comments through the Federal Register — the link is available in our Hyperlink Appendix on the right-hand side of the screen.
- One more question about this, Tandice — I'm sure many of our viewers are DSOs who have students currently engaged in STEM OPT or who are thinking about applying for this benefit. In what circumstances will a student currently engaged in or applying for STEM OPT be eligible for the proposed 24-month extension?

PRESENTER 2:

- Under the proposed rule, and assuming there are no changes affecting the time period in the final rule, a student currently on 17-month STEM OPT at the time the final rule goes into effect will be allowed to extend their current session.

Slide 5: Policy Guidance Review — Student Employment

MODERATOR:

- Great, thanks, Tandice. I'm sure we'll continue to hear a lot about STEM OPT in the near future.



- Keeping on a similar subject — Marissa, let's bring you into this and talk about recent and upcoming SEVP policy guidance.
- I know we posted some employment draft guidance documents to Study in the States this past September for public comment. Could you give us a quick recap?

PRESENTER 1:

- Sure, Lauren. As you mentioned, SEVP recently released five draft policy guidance documents to Study in the States. These guidance documents focused on topics related to student employment, including:
 - F-1 off-campus employment,
 - F-1 emergent circumstances,
 - F-1 on-campus employment,
 - F-1 internship with an international organization, and
 - F-1 and M-1 general employment.
- SEVP received a combined total of 241 comments on all five guidance documents. We are currently reviewing your feedback to develop additional guidance on the subject, which we expect to release in the coming months.

Slide 6: Upcoming Draft Policy Guidance — Student Employment and Pathway Programs

MODERATOR:

- Speaking of upcoming guidance, does SEVP have any additional ones in the queue?

PRESENTER 1:

- Yes, we actually have quite a few draft guidance documents scheduled for release. SEVP expects to release six draft guidance documents both on student employment and pathway programs.
- The student employment — practical training draft guidance document will discuss the requirements for students applying for or currently engaged in forms of practical training. This guidance series will include guidance on the following forms of practical training:
 - F-1 OPT,
 - F-1 curricular practical training,



- M-1 practical training,
- F-1 and M-1 record keeping and reporting, and
- H-1B cap-gap.
- We also expect to release a new draft guidance document on pathway programs, which follows up on the 2014 draft guidance series, discusses the way forward, and clarifies SEVP's position on these programs.

Slide 7: Upcoming Interim Final Policy Guidance — F-1 Student Absence

MODERATOR:

- That's great, Marissa. Between all of the draft guidance you just discussed and the recent STEM OPT regulation, seems like SEVP's got a lot going on.
- With that being said, are there plans to release any interim final guidance documents in the near future?

PRESENTER 1:

- We actually have quite a few interim final guidance documents planned for release, as well. Stakeholders can look forward to four interim final guidance documents, which were previously available as draft guidance and revised to incorporate stakeholder feedback.
- We'll start with F-1 Student Absence, which explains how F-1 students leaving the United States during a school session can apply for a temporary absence, and the process for readmission.

Slide 8: Upcoming Interim Final Policy Guidance — Annual Vacation, Student Absence and School Breaks

PRESENTER 1:

- We've grouped the next two guidance documents together since they discuss similar items. As you can see here, we'll release guidance that looks at F-1 Annual Vacation and School Breaks, as well as M-1 Student Absence and School Breaks.
- These guidance documents will define an annual vacation for F-1 students and discuss how M-1 students can apply for a temporary absence.



Slide 9: Upcoming Interim Final Policy Guidance — Definition of the Academic Year

PRESENTER 1:

- I know many of our stakeholders have been eagerly awaiting guidance on the Definition of the Academic Year. This guidance will supersede previously-issued interim final guidance and provides additional clarification concerning the definition of an academic year.

MODERATOR:

- That's a lot of guidance. Can I assume that's all of the guidance SEVP will be working on in the near future?

Slide 10: Upcoming Interim Final Policy Guidance — Border Commuter Address Requirements

PRESENTER 1:

- Actually, we also have plans to release five new interim final guidance documents that were not previously available as draft guidance.
- These guidance documents will include topics like Border Commuter Address Requirements, which will clarify regulations for F-1 and M-1 border commuter students.

Slide 11: Upcoming Interim Final Policy Guidance — F-1 Five-Month Guidance and DSO Staffing

PRESENTER 1:

- We also plan to release F-1 Five Month Guidance that will look at the allowable time between school transfers and student reinstatement. Even though we've titled this guidance as "F-1 Five Month Guidance," it's important to note that the guidance will also discuss how school breaks and annual vacation affect M-1 reduced course load and temporary absence.



- Additionally, as a follow-up to the recent regulatory change effecting DSO staffing, we'll release a guidance document that looks at the minimum staffing numbers for DSOs at instructional sites.

Slide 12: Upcoming Interim Final Policy Guidance — Engaged in Instruction and Change of Ownership

PRESENTER 1:

- Finally, we'll release guidance documents that will discuss two hot topics for our stakeholders — Engaged in Instruction and Change of Ownership.
- These guidance documents will look at the limited circumstances for the SEVP-certification of a program of study without prior enrollment and clarify when SEVP believes a change of ownership to have occurred at a school.

Slide 13: Policy and Regulatory Updates — Hot Topics and Trends

MODERATOR:

- That's a lot of upcoming guidance. I want to make sure all of the folks listening in here are on the same page – can you explain the difference between draft guidance and interim final guidance?

PRESENTER 1:

- Of course! SEVP releases two types of policy guidance for public comment: draft guidance and interim final guidance.
- Draft guidance is *not* agency policy and does *not* have the enforcement authority of federal governing regulations. Draft guidance provides an indicator of the guidance we are considering and opens a dialogue with the academic community through the comment process.
- In comparison, interim final guidance is official SEVP policy used by adjudicators, but remains open for public comment. Schools are expected to comply with interim final guidance, and non-compliance may be questioned during an SEVP out-of-cycle review or recertification.



MODERATOR:

- That's really helpful — so, viewers – remember that it is important to pay attention to interim final guidance, since your schools are expected to comply with all of these guidance documents.
- One last question for you about this, Marissa – how can our viewers know when a new guidance document is available on Study in the States?

PRESENTER 1:

- You can actually register to receive alerts when SEVP posts new draft guidance for comment on the SEVP Guidance for Comment page. On this page, you will have the option to enter your email to subscribe to guidance notifications, which will enable SEVP to send you an email notification when new guidance is available.
- SEVP will also send out a SEVIS Broadcast Message and promote new guidance through Study in the States social media.

MODERATOR:

- That's great; thanks, Marissa! And again, I just want to remind everyone that the link to the Study in the States SEVP Guidance for Comment page is in our Hyperlink Appendix located on our downloads section to the right.

Slide 14: Regulatory Fast Facts — DSO Staffing and F-2/M-2 Part-time Study

MODERATOR:

- Ok — let's change gears a little bit in the policy department and jump back to you, Tandice.
- As many of our stakeholders are aware, DHS amended its regulations earlier this year to improve management of international student programs and increase opportunities for study by spouses and children of F and M students.
- Can you tell us a little more about this regulation?

PRESENTER 2:

- Sure, Lauren.



- The regulation removes the cap on the number of DSOs one school can employ and permits SEVP-certified schools to nominate an appropriate number based on their school's specific needs.
- To reflect this change, SEVP deployed SEVIS functionality that allows the PDSO to enter the names and information for more than 10 school officials in SEVIS and print this information on the Form I-17.
- The new rule also permits F-2 and M-2 dependents of international students to engage in part-time study at SEVP-certified schools at the post-secondary level. An F-2 or M-2 dependent who wants to enroll full time in a course of post-secondary academic or vocational study must apply for and obtain approval from USCIS to change their nonimmigrant classification to F-1 or M-1 prior to beginning full-time study.

MODERATOR:

- Since the change took place in May, we've received the same question from quite a few of our stakeholders. Does the new regulation change record keeping and reporting requirements for F and M students and their dependents?

PRESENTER 2:

- No — DSO record keeping and reporting responsibilities for F and M students and dependents remain the same. However, stakeholders should remember that DSOs are not responsible for overseeing or tracking dependent study, since dependents do not need to enroll in or attend classes at the post-secondary level to maintain their status. Does that make sense?

MODERATOR:

- It does to me, but if our viewers have any further questions about this new regulation, is there a resource out there to assist them?

PRESENTER 2:

- There is! You can access a very useful FAQ document regarding the Adjustments to Designated School Official Limits and Dependent Study, which is located under the "Helpful Documents" header on the Certification page at [ICE.gov/SEVIS/Schools](https://ice.dhs.gov/SEVIS/Schools).



MODERATOR:

- And once again, folks, that link is in our Hyperlink Appendix so you can easily find that FAQ document.

Slide 15: Release Update — SEVIS Release 6.21

MODERATOR:

- Thanks Tandice – I’m going to pass it back to you, Marissa, to get some SEVIS updates from recent and upcoming releases.
- SEVP deployed SEVIS Release 6.21 this past June and was the largest SEVIS update in recent years.
- Could you provide us with some background about this release and any important information DSOs should be aware of?

PRESENTER 1:

- Sure! SEVIS Release 6.21 included enhancements to improve the user experience, standardize information requirements and ensure SEVIS data accuracy.
- As part of this release, SEVP updated the Form I-20 in part to reflect new naming standards in SEVIS. The Form I-20 has a completely new look that includes DHS branding.
 - DSOs should note that the updated Form I-20 is not required for in-country use until July 1, 2016, though the new form is currently accepted at U.S. ports of entry.
- The release also implemented new standards for names and email addresses, and validated U.S. street addresses listed in SEVIS. All nonimmigrant student names, U.S. street addresses and email addresses must follow these standards to ensure they are complete and legitimate.

MODERATOR:

- The name and address standardization has been a hot topic with our stakeholders. Wasn’t there an Address Doctor feature included with this release as well?

PRESENTER 1:

- Yep! We introduced the Address Doctor feature to assist with address standardization.



- Unfortunately, we are aware that Address Doctor has caused problems for schools when registering and updating student addresses, both in real-time interface and batch.
- We are currently reviewing the address-related problems like:
 - Why the “Students Without Valid U.S. Address” list contains previously validated addresses;
 - Why the suggested address is in a different location from the entered address;
 - How to enter addresses that have fractions in them, such as ½; and
 - Issues related to batch validation of the new SEVIS address requirements.
- We anticipate these issues will be resolved with the December SEVIS Release 6.23.
- If you have any questions about Address Doctor or SEVIS address validation, you can visit the SEVIS Help Hub on Study in the States to access associated resource guides, fact sheets and question and answer documents.

Slide 16: Planning Ahead — SEVIS News and Upcoming Enhancements

MODERATOR:

- Again, the SEVIS Help Hub link is in our handy hyperlink document.
- Anything else on the SEVIS front?

PRESENTER 1:

- Yes — the second PDSO/DSO Annual Verification period is quickly approaching — beginning on December 2, 2015, PDSOs will have access to the annual verification tool in SEVIS. The deadline for verification is March 2, 2016. Your school should be familiar with this process from last year, but if you have questions, you can definitely reach out to the SEVP Response Center or your school’s assigned SEVP field representative.
 - We hope to surpass the success of the first PDSO/DSO Annual Verification, where 94 percent of SEVP-certified schools verified school officials by the deadline.
- We strongly encourage schools to complete the verification process as soon after December 2 as possible. Remember, while only the PDSO can verify school officials in SEVIS, all school officials will receive an email notification from us when the verification period begins, in addition to the continued reminder notification in SEVIS until verification is complete.



- Failure by the PDSO to complete the verification process by March 2, 2016 will result in loss of SEVIS access and batch capability for all DSOs at the school.

MODERATOR:

- Wow, so all PDSOs and DSOs should definitely mark their calendars for the verification project! And, DSOs, be sure to check-in with your PDSO to make sure he or she completed this annual verification — the sooner they can take care of it the less you'll have to worry.
- So, Marissa, you mentioned a December SEVIS release earlier, but isn't there also a SEVIS release scheduled for November as well?

Slide 17: Planning Ahead — Upcoming Enhancements

PRESENTER 1:

- Well, the next SEVIS release, which was scheduled for November, is now scheduled to deploy in December. SEVP delayed the deployment of this release to December due to feedback from the SEVIS batch working group, which consists of developers and users from SEVP-certified schools and programs. They requested additional time to test changes associated with this release. In consideration of their needs, SEVP will now deploy this release on December fourth.

MODERATOR:

- I see — so, in addition to fixing the issues with the Address Doctor, what else can we expect to see with the December release?

PRESENTER 1:

- With the new release, SEVIS users will be able to access additional information when viewing a student's event history. Basically, this feature will allow you to see a before and after picture of a student's SEVIS record.
- This release will also introduce functionalities to assist DSOs with student employment, including inputs for additional OPT employer information and the automatic termination of student records for unemployment in certain circumstances.



- This release will also require student email addresses and telephone numbers when a DSO updates a student's personal information in SEVIS. There will be three options for DSOs to provide telephone information:
 - The student's U.S. telephone number,
 - The student's international telephone number, or
 - No telephone number available.

MODERATOR:

- So quick question about the automatic termination – could you explain how the termination of a student's record for 90-days of unemployment will work?

PRESENTER 1:

- When a DSO enters the end date for employment, SEVIS will begin to count the consecutive days of unemployment on a student's record. For each calendar day there is no new employer information in SEVIS, the count will increase by one. When the count reaches 110 days, SEVIS will automatically terminate the student's record.

MODERATOR:

- Will there be a new alert that identifies student records that SEVIS is about to terminate?

PRESENTER 1:

- Yes — there will be an alert list for DSOs titled, "students who have approved OPT without current employer information." We will also develop an alert for students terminated for exceeding the maximum number of days of unemployment.

MODERATOR:

- Great! So, since 2015 is quickly coming to an end – can you believe it's already November? Could you give us a sneak peek of what SEVIS enhancements are planned for 2016?

PRESENTER 1:

- Sure! SEVP plans to deploy several SEVIS releases over the next year. We've listed some of our planned enhancements on the accompanying slide. We hope that many of these enhancements will improve record keeping and reporting requirements.



MODERATOR:

- Okay, one last thing with SEVIS – between the PDSO/DSO Annual Verification Project and the many planned SEVIS enhancements coming over the next year, where can folks go to learn more about everything? You’ve mentioned the SEVIS Help Hub a few times as a place to get resources. Can you tell us about it?

Slide 18: SEVIS Help Hub — StudyintheStates.dhs.gov/SEVIS-Help-Hub

PRESENTER 1:

- So, the SEVIS Help Hub is a really great resource that we have on Study in the States. It’s your one-stop-shop about SEVIS information
- We want to make this resource useful for you, so we want your feedback. When you visit a page in the Help Hub, we encourage you to complete the “Was this Helpful?” feature. Your feedback will enable us to tailor the SEVIS Help Hub to meet your needs.

MODERATOR:

- Again, you guessed it — you can find the link to the SEVIS Help Hub and the email address for SEVIS batch webinars in our Hyperlink Appendix.

Slide 19: What’s New in School Certification — Processing Updates

MODERATOR:

- Ok, I think that wraps up enough talk about SEVIS, so let’s move on to another hot topic — I am sure many of our viewers would appreciate an update on current processing times for updates to the Form I-17 and recertification.
- Marissa, do you have any information from the School Certification Unit about these current processing times?

PRESENTER 1:

- The School Certification Unit is currently processing updates to the Form I-17 from March and April 2015. The average time frame for adjudication is at least 60 days. However, due to the high number of petition updates submitted daily and the nature of the requested update, it is really important to note that processing can take longer.



- In terms of recertification, the current processing time is at least six months and could take longer, depending on a school's specific circumstances.
- I want to assure everyone that we remain committed to ensuring timely processing for Form I-17 updates and recertification. One of our top priorities that we're working on as we speak is to reduce processing times and the current backlog for Form I-17 updates.

MODERATOR:

- Do you have any reminders about Form I-17 updates and recertification?

PRESENTER 1:

- I know you've heard us say this before, but I really want to stress that the Form I-17 is a living document. So, school officials, you are expected to maintain an updated Form I-17 throughout the year and not at recertification time.
- Also, remember that federal regulation requires all SEVP-certified schools to undergo the recertification process every two years.

Slide 20: School Certification Best Practices — Keep your Form I-17 Up-to-Date

MODERATOR:

- Sounds like updates and recertification are two very important processes that school officials need to pay attention to. Do you have any tips for designated school officials to assist them with making updates or filing for recertification?

PRESENTER 1:

- We actually have several really great tips for our school officials. Our first tip is to make sure you keep your Form I-17 up-to-date. Make sure you submit any updates within 21 days of a change. Also, remember that an update to the Form I-17 is not the same as the recertification process. So, it's not going to extend your school's CED.



Slide 21: School Certification Best Practices — Keep your Form I-17 Up-to-Date

PRESENTER 1:

- Our second tip is to keep important dates in mind when planning to submit a Form I-17 update or file for recertification.
- Your school's CED is the most important date to remember. All DSOs will receive a SEVIS notification starting 180 days prior to your CED. At this point, you'll want to ensure that your school starts planning for the recertification process — review your I-17 to get the process started on your end.
- However, it is also important to keep in mind any important upcoming events in your office; such as, is there a DSO retiring? Or, are there other staffing changes you know are coming down the pike? Remember to account for anything that could affect your school's ability to file for recertification.
- We want to encourage you to plan accordingly to prevent your school from being withdrawn on its CED.

Slide 22: School Certification Best Practices — Check Your Email Address in SEVIS

PRESENTER 1:

- Additionally, you really want to keep in mind, and **regularly check the PDSO email address** in SEVIS, to ensure it is accurate so the school can continue to receive notifications and requests for evidence from us. This information will go to the PDSO's email.

Slide 23: School Certification Best Practices — Check Your Email Address in SEVIS

- Finally, if you have questions about Form I-17 updates or recertification, please don't hesitate to contact the SRC by phone or by email.



- If your school has a field representative, you can also reach out to them with your questions concerning the Form I-17 and recertification.

Slide 24: Compliance and the Community — Employment Authorization for Certain Nepalese Students

MODERATOR:

- Those are some really great tips, Marissa! Again, that contact information is located in the Hyperlink Appendix.
- Now let's move on to some hot topics from international students. Tandice, I'm going to pass it over to you. Just yesterday, SEVP sent out a broadcast message with some breaking news about Nepalese students. Can you provide a recap for us in case anyone missed the message yesterday?

PRESENTER 2:

- Absolutely, Lauren. Yesterday, ICE announced that the Secretary of Homeland Security suspended certain regulatory requirements for F-1 students from Nepal as a result of the April 2015 earthquake. It took a little bit of time but it went through!
 - This relief only applies to students from Nepal who were in F-1 status in the United States on June 24, 2015, and who were attending SEVP-certified schools.
- With this suspension of requirements, these students can receive employment authorization, can work an increased number of hours during their school session, and, if it's necessary, reduce their course load as well.
- This will remain in effect through December 24, 2016. DSOs, remind any eligible Nepalese students that they must apply for this relief by December 21, 2015.

MODERATOR:

- It's always good to hear when DHS helps out students from countries going through situations like these.

PRESENTER 2:

- Absolutely, Lauren. There are more than 9,000 F-1 students from Nepal in the United States as of September 2015, so I am glad that we're talking about this. This disaster has made it



difficult for many students to return to their homes in Nepal. Without this special employment authorization and suspension of regulatory requirements, these students might not be able to make ends meet.

Slide 25: Compliance and the Community — I-901 SEVIS Fee Payment

MODERATOR:

- Excellent point, Tandice.
- Besides this new relief measure for Nepalese students, are there any other hot topics affecting international students that we should be aware of?

PRESENTER 2:

- Yes, there several pretty hot topics these days. These include the Form I-515A, the I-901 SEVIS Fee payment, and targeted scams.

MODERATOR:

- Could we kick it off with the I-901 SEVIS Fee payment process and get a little information of what's going on with that?

PRESENTER 2:

- This past summer, SEVP updated the SEVIS Form I-901 to include a mandatory email address field, which allows the program to send students an instant email notification when their I-901 SEVIS Fee payment status changes.

MODERATOR:

- So, these are mandatory. What happens if a student doesn't have an email address?

PRESENTER 2:

- That's a good question. Many schools provide a student with an email address. However, if a student doesn't have one, they will need to create an email address using a free email provider such as Yahoo or Google.
- This update saves time for students paying by check or money order because they will not need to check [FMJFee.com](https://www.fmjfee.com), because they'll get that email. However, students do still need to log into the site to print their receipt.



- That brings me to another important point about the I-901 SEVIS Fee. SEVP recently mailed a second round of notices to Active F and M students who do not have a valid I-901 SEVIS Fee payment on their SEVIS record. Remember, all students are required to pay. SEVP allows students 30 days from receipt of the notice to make a payment before the student's record is terminated.
 - DSOs, you will receive an email notification with information concerning any Active students at their school without a valid I-901 SEVIS Fee payment. If you do not receive an email from SEVP, then all Active students at your school have a valid I-901 SEVIS Fee payment on their record.
- That's certainly a lot to take in. Any questions Lauren?

Slide 26: Compliance and the Community — Student Scams

MODERATOR:

- I think that about covers it for the I-901 SEVIS Fee.
- You also mentioned student scams as one of the various hot topics – what's going on with these?

PRESENTER 2:

- I'll tell you a little bit, and it's kind of related to the I-901 SEVIS Fee.
- DHS continues to see an increasing number of scams targeting international students. Scammers tend to target students while they adjust to their new environment, and take advantage of cultural and language barriers that often make it difficult for international students to determine whether an offer for help or request for money is real or fake.

MODERATOR:

- Can you give us some examples of the common scams targeting these students?

PRESENTER 2:

- Increasingly common scams targeting international students include:
 - Attempts to solicit funds for the I-901 SEVIS Fee; and
 - Requests for money to help students maintain status or transfer to a new school.



- Some of the methodologies include targeting students by telephone or through social media sites, such as Snapchat, Facebook and Twitter. Some scammers may manipulate caller ID technology so the call appears to come from a legitimate government agency, or use illegally-obtained personal information about the student to scare them into providing immediate payment or information.

MODERATOR:

- That's definitely really scary stuff. I know if I was a school official, I would want to find as many ways to protect my students. So, what can DSOs do to help protect their students from potential scams?

PRESENTER 2:

- There are some things you can do. We encourage DSOs to remind their students to be vigilant and to:
 - Not give out any personal or financial information;
 - Remind them to collect the contact information from the caller if it is a phone call from the person who is calling;
 - Also, if it is a phone call, end the conversation immediately if threats and intimidation going on; and
 - The student should contact you, their DSOs, and they can contact the Homeland Security Investigations Tip Line. This number is available on the screen.
- Remember, at this time, students will not receive a call from SEVP about their I-901 SEVIS Fee. We are not making these inquiries by phone at this time.

MODERATOR:

- That is a very good thing to know, Tandice. You mentioned that students should report scams to the HSI Tip Line. Should DSOs also report scams to this number, too?

PRESENTER 2:

- Absolutely, DSOs can use the HSI Tip Line, too and are encouraged to do so. Keep this number handy in case you need it.



Slide 27: Compliance and the Community — The Form I-515A, “Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor”

MODERATOR:

- That’s a good idea, Tandice, and the number is also in the Hyperlink Appendix, too. Remember all of the links and contact information is included in this appendix, too.

PRESENTER 2:

- Lauren, would you like to talk about the I-515A as well?

MODERATOR:

- Yes. What’s going on with this topic?

PRESENTER 2:

- DSOs should be aware that SEVP will soon begin terminating student and dependent records for failure to comply with Form I-515A submission requirements. Form I-515A documentation must be submitted to SEVP within 30 days of the student’s date-of-entry into the United States.
- SEVP will also deny duration of stay or authorized period of stay if the student or exchange visitor enters the country on a Form I-20 or DS-2019 that is different from the one on the student’s Active SEVIS record.

MODERATOR:

- How can DSOs help their students with Form I-515A submission requirements to make sure they don’t have their record terminated?

PRESENTER 2:

- DSOs should help the student to submit all relevant information in one package to SEVP. We’ve listed what information a student needs to submit to SEVP on the screen.
- At the same time, there might be supplementary information that we need. For example, if there’s a SEVIS record correction requests, DSOs should provide the student and SEVP with the SRC ticket number, along with any other associated paperwork.



- And, for pending reinstatement or change of status with USCIS, DSOs should be aware that USCIS might consider the change of status petition abandoned. However, a DSO should assist the student by submitting a cover letter attesting the student is enrolled in a full course of study, if eligible, along with the USCIS receipt number and any other associated paperwork.
- And, a final reminder about Forms I-515A: we need only **original, fully-signed** Forms I-20 and DS-2019, and will not accept an electronic copy or photocopy. SEVP will promptly return original documents to the DSO or sponsor for return to the student or exchange visitor following adjudication of the Form I-515A.

MODERATOR:

- Are there any other student hot topics you wanted to discuss, Tandice?

PRESENTER 2:

- No — that was a lot Lauren, I think that covers it.

Slide 28: Compliance and the Community — School Hot Topics

MODERATOR:

- Ok great – let's move on then! Sticking with the compliance area, are there any hot issues affecting SEVP-certified schools?

PRESENTER 2:

- Yes, there are. We have a bit of an announcement. In the coming years, SEVP is looking to establish a more rigorous process for authorizing access to SEVIS. The reasons we're looking to do this is to:
 - Mitigate threats to national security,
 - Deter immigration fraud, AND
 - Ensure compliance with immigration law.
- What we'll do is implement a vetting process for all SEVIS users and those requesting SEVIS access. We encourage you to stay tuned to Broadcast Messages and Study in the States for additional information on this project moving forward.



MODERATOR:

- That's some new information for our stakeholders, thanks for sharing that. I think it's a really great initiative that we're starting to pursue.
- So, any other hot topics for schools?

PRESENTER 2:

- We've gotten news that some of our stakeholders are wondering about out-of-cycle reviews and requests for evidence. And, a request for evidence is also known as an RFE.
- Per federal regulation, SEVP will contact the PDSO for items related to the school's compliance. ***It is really important that the PDSO responds to SEVP with all evidence as soon as possible to ensure timely adjudication and continued SEVP certification.*** This evidence must be submitted electronically to the email address specified on the notice.
- The time allowed for responding to an out-of-cycle review or RFE differs depending on whether the request is for a Form I-17 update, recertification or other matter. The deadline for response will be located at the top and bottom of the document.
- All in all, very important things to remember. Any questions, Lauren?

Slide 29: Record Keeping Best Practices — Keep Student Records Up-to-Date

MODERATOR:

- No, I don't. But I will remind those PDSOs and DSOs out there: if your school reviews an RFE, make sure you respond to SEVP within the deadline.
- On the subject of record keeping and reporting requirements, which seem to be frequent issues for SEVP-certified schools, does SEVP have any tips for school officials to ensure their school remains in compliance with these SEVP policies?

PRESENTER 2:

- We do! To help DSOs with their record keeping and reporting requirements, we want to remind you of a couple of tips and best practices.
- Our first tip is to keep your student records up-to-date. Like your school's Form I-17 that Marissa mentioned, a student's SEVIS record is a living document that needs to be updated



to reflect any changes to their information. As a DSO, you have the ability to take certain actions on a student's SEVIS record, many of which are listed on this slide.

- So, please make sure your student's records contain the correct information about items such as what program of study the student is currently in.

Slide 30: Record Keeping Best Practices — Ensure Accurate and Timely Reporting of Student Information

- On the next slide, DSOs have the responsibility to make sure a student's personal, financial, dependent, or employment information is accurately reported in SEVIS.
- Many items have a legal time limit for you to report changes to SEVP — we've listed some of the important information to remember on the screen.
- As a reminder, automatic SEVIS functions occur after the legal time limits to register student records for each session, term or semester have already expired. So, remember that failure to update a student's record may result in termination of the student's record.

Slide 31: Record Keeping Best Practices — Do Not Share SEVIS Passwords

- Our last reminder is about SEVIS passwords. Please do not share your SEVIS password with anyone — it is a security risk that can really compromise the accountability and confidentiality of SEVIS.
- Always keep your logon information secure — don't save your password to an office computer used by other employees and do create a new password if you believe that yours has been compromised.

Slide 32: Enhancing Customer Support — News from the SRC

MODERATOR:

- Great tips, Tandice – thank you so much for those! I'm going to give you a little bit of a break, and pass it over to Marissa now to talk about the SEVP Response Center, or SRC.
- I am sure some of our viewers may have heard about a change in how SEVP processes temporary absences.



- Marissa, could you explain this process change and how it affects school officials to make sure we're all on the same page?

PRESENTER 1:

- In response to everyone's feedback, SEVP changed when we accept "Requests for Correction to Student Status" through the SRC. DSOs can now submit requests to change an F-1 student's SEVIS record to Active up to 60 days in advance of the student's return from a temporary absence.
- If an F-1 student takes time away from school due to unforeseen circumstances — such as a family emergency — when they would otherwise be required to enroll in classes, the DSO must set the student's SEVIS record to Terminated for Authorized Early Withdrawal. When the student is ready to re-enroll, the student should seek approval from their certified school and the DSO should request a Correction to Student Status, which will change the student to Active status.
- Remember, student absences must be shorter than five months, and the purpose of the student's return must be to enroll in school.

MODERATOR:

- I think that extra time will definitely benefit the school officials. But, before we move on to our next topic, is there any additional news about the SRC you can share with our audience?

PRESENTER 1:

- One more thing — you might remember that earlier this year, the SEVIS Help Desk merged its functions into the SRC to streamline stakeholder support. As a result, the SRC now handles questions related to the international student process, SEVP policy guidance or SEVIS technical questions. So, they are your go-to resource.
- All SEVP customer service representatives are equipped to handle your inquiry and provide guidance and direction. We encourage you to stay tuned to Study in the States and associated social media outlets for additional news from the SRC, including updates on planned enhancements.



Slide 33: Localized Support — Field Representative Unit

MODERATOR:

- Awesome! The SRC is definitely a great resource. Our school officials out there should also remember that, in addition to the SRC, SEVP also provides localized support through our field representatives.
- Tandice, going back to you, do we have any updates from the field?

PRESENTER 2:

- Yes — we are pleased to announce that the third class of field representatives successfully completed their training at SEVP headquarters and deployed to their respective territories this past August.
- Field representatives are actively engaged with schools and organizations in their respective territory. Since deployment, field representatives have visited more than 9,400 schools and campuses, and collectively attended more than 80 conferences and events across the United States.

MODERATOR:

- That's awesome — it seems like the field representatives are expanding SEVP's outreach. You talked about training three classes thus far. But, how many field representatives has SEVP trained and deployed now?

PRESENTER 2:

- To date, SEVP has trained and deployed 42 field representatives. We hired and plan to deploy the fourth class of field representatives next month, and they are currently being trained at SEVP headquarters now. As always, we will continue to provide the academic community with information about the fourth class through Study in the States and social media.

MODERATOR:

- Since you talk about SEVP field representatives coming into SEVP, being hired, and going through training, can you talk about that specific training they go through before deploying to their territory?



PRESENTER 2:

- Although many have years of experience as DSOs or SEVP employees, all field representatives must complete a comprehensive eight-week training program at SEVP headquarters and pass a final exam prior to deployment.
- The training course includes things like:
 - Legislative and regulatory training;
 - SEVP processes, policies and procedures;
 - Frequently asked questions; and
 - Educational visits to other government organizations, such as the Department of State and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.
- SEVP recognizes that field representative training may need adjustment over time to account for changes within SEVP or within the academic community.
- We appreciate your continued support of field representatives, and encourage you to provide feedback on your experience following a school visit with an SEVP field representative. You can use the Field Representative Feedback Form to do that.

Slide 34: A Resource for Everyone — Study in the States

MODERATOR:

- I want to mention that, if you do have a field representative already — the majority of folks out there should have one — that the field representative will provide you with a link to the Feedback Form. It is very important that you fill out this form so we can continue serving you the best way that we can in the field.
- Moving onto other resources, I know we've mentioned Study in the States quite a bit throughout this presentation and at any other events you might attend with SEVP. Marissa, can you tell the audience about Study in the States and the newly available resources?

PRESENTER 1:

- Sure! First, Study in the States is a great resource for everyone, whether you're a seasoned DSO, a new DSO, or an international student. We've added a lot of new features this year, many of which you can see on this slide.



- I'd like to point out one new resource that we deployed this year which was our Study in the States widget. This new tool allows you to embed a button on your school or association website that will enable your site visitors to click and have direct access to Study in the States. This is a really great tool for schools to use and to easily direct their international students to so they don't need to recreate the wheel with all of the content we already have up on our website.
- Be sure to check Study in the States on a regular basis to see our new features and to learn about hot topics in the international student process.

MODERATOR:

- That's a really neat tool, Marissa. And, yes, I think it's another great reminder and a plug for Study in the States that we have a lot of tools for school officials, but also for international students as well. It's really useful for you to push that out to your incoming students and current students.

Slide 35: Engage with SEVP — Stay Connected

MODERATOR:

- So, Study in the States is definitely growing and improving thanks in part to stakeholder feedback. Another awesome resource for both students and school officials on Study in the States is our blog.

PRESENTER 1:

- Actually, Lauren, I'd like to jump in really quickly. I want to point everyone to the newly launched "Community Voices" blog series on Study in the States, which is where we invite members of the international student community to share their insights with our audience.
- If you'd like to contribute to that blog, please send us an email at SEVPCommunications@ice.dhs.gov. The email is up there on the slide now.

MODERATOR:

- Yes, that really is a great series! Please definitely reach out to us if you're interested — that email address is in your Hyperlink Appendix.



- Also, another way that you can get in touch with us or stay up-to-date with our information is to follow us on Twitter ([@StudyinStates](https://twitter.com/StudyinStates)) — you can see our handle up there on the screen — and “like” us on Facebook and connect with SEVP on LinkedIn.
- I just want to note here that Twitter and Facebook are geared towards students and school officials, while LinkedIn is focused more towards the school officials. So, don’t worry about sharing that with your students.
- We’ve also listed how you can engage with us through conferences on this slide. So, if you have an event with your school or organization and would like to have an SEVP representative present, definitely reach out to us.

Slide 36: Coming Soon — Ask the Experts

MODERATOR:

- Okay, a few more announcements to wrap up today’s session. I mentioned at the beginning of today’s webinar: this is part of a series of webinars that will continue to air on Study in the States over the next year.
- Our next webinar in the series will be called, “Ask the Experts,” where we will focus on a key topic or trend in international education and hear directly from subject matter experts. In these webinars, you’ll be able to ask questions live and we’ll be able to respond back to you. So we’re definitely excited about that one.

Slide 37: SEVP Values Your Feedback

MODERATOR:

- That is a perfect segue into to the last item I want to cover for today. Since we’re going to continue hosting these webinars, we really want to hear from you about this presentation. We want these webinars to be helpful and informative and really meet your needs and add value to your time with SEVP.
- The best way to provide your feedback to us is through the Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey on Study in the States. And, yes, the link is on the screen and, you guessed it, in the Hyperlink Appendix on the right hand side. Make sure you grab that, since we’re about to wrap up for today. But please take a few moments when we’re done to let us know your thoughts.



Slide 38: SEVP Contact Information

MODERATOR:

- That concludes our session for today! Once again, I want to thank you all for joining us.
- We'll leave you with this information for how to contact us. We mentioned the SRC earlier in this presentation — the contact information is available here and in the Hyperlink Appendix. So, if you have any questions about the content in today's webinar — you can talk to the SRC or to your field representative, if you have one.
- Once again, thank you for joining us today — we look forward to receiving your feedback through the Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey and seeing you at future webinars and other events.